



## Commonwealth of Kentucky



**Kentucky Court of Justice**  
**Chief Justice Joseph E. Lambert**

**Justice & Public Safety Cabinet**  
**Lieutenant Governor Steve Pence**

Contact: Leigh Anne Hiatt, APR, Administrative Office of the Courts  
502-573-2350, cell 502-545-2839, [lhiatt@kycourts.net](mailto:lhiatt@kycourts.net)

*For Immediate Release*

### Rep. Yonts, Justice Graves and Sen. Rhoads announce that Drug Court is coming to Muhlenberg and McLean counties

FRANKFORT, Ky., July 11, 2005 — Individuals facing drug-related charges in Muhlenberg and McLean counties now have access to a court designed specifically to address this issue.

Rep. Brent Yonts, Supreme Court Justice J. William Graves and Sen. Jerry Rhoads announced Friday at a news conference that Drug Court would be implemented in Muhlenberg and McLean counties. The news conference took place at the Muhlenberg County Judicial Building in Greenville before a crowd of judges, law enforcement officers, attorneys and community leaders. Also speaking were Circuit Judge David H. Jernigan and Teresa Barton, executive director for the Office of Drug Control Policy for the Justice & Public Safety Cabinet.

Rep. Yonts serves House District 15, which consists of Christian, Hopkins and Muhlenberg counties. Sen. Rhoads serves Senate District 6, which is comprised of Hopkins, Muhlenberg and Ohio counties. Muhlenberg is among the 24 counties in the 1st Supreme Court District, which is represented by Justice Graves.

Because the Muhlenberg/McLean County Drug Court has been a pilot project since January 2002, the program is expected to be fully operational immediately. Judge Jernigan, who serves Muhlenberg and McLean counties, will volunteer his time to conduct the weekly Drug Court sessions.

"Drug Court offers an alternative to putting people in jail and finding that they end up doing the same thing again when they get out," said Rep. Yonts. "This program requires treatment, it requires judicial supervision and it requires employment. It allows them to be with their families. The taxpayer saves about \$10,000 per year when a participant goes through Drug Court instead of to jail or prison. The program works and funding has been a long time in coming."

The 2005 General Assembly included \$2 million in the Executive Branch budget for an adult Drug Court to be established in Kentucky's coal-producing counties that currently do not have a Drug Court, according to Connie Payne, general manager for Kentucky Drug Court. She said that the counties include Boyd (32nd Judicial), Carter/Elliott (37th Judicial), Crittenden/Union/Webster (5th Judicial), Hopkins (4th Judicial), Henderson (51st Judicial), Muhlenberg/McLean (45th Judicial), and Hancock/Ohio/Butler/Edmonson (38th Judicial).

Effective July 1, 2005, the state Office of Drug Control Policy distributed the money set aside in the Executive Branch budget to the Administrative Office of the Courts, which oversees the operation of Kentucky Drug Court.

“The funding provided by the General Assembly and the Governor’s Office is sufficient for staff, drug testing supplies and treatment resources in these rural areas of Kentucky,” said Payne. “Eleven of the newly funded counties are located in the heart of Kentucky’s struggle against methamphetamine. With this latest appropriation, Kentucky will have 49 operational Drug Court programs serving 72 counties.”

### **How Drug Court Works**

Drug Court provides a sentencing alternative that addresses the high relapse rates in nonviolent, drug-related cases. The mission is to create a criminal justice environment that stops illicit drug use and related criminal activity. The concept promotes recovery through substance abuse education and treatment, with participants taking one to two years to complete the program’s three phases before they begin aftercare.

Drug Court targets adult and juvenile participants who have criminal charges, meet program criteria and are willing to enter the program by choice. A team consisting of the judge, public defender, local prosecutor, law enforcement, treatment provider and Drug Court staff reviews each case prior to the offender being inducted into the program.

Drug Court staff and participants work together to develop individual program plans that include specific responsibilities and goals with timetables. Plans include group, family and individual counseling; urine testing; educational and vocational training; and health and community activities. Participants report frequently to the Drug Court judge who monitors compliance. When participants successfully complete the program, charges may be dismissed through diversion or conditional discharge may be granted through probation.

Kentucky Drug Court is administered through the Administrative Office of the Courts in Frankfort. The AOC is the operational arm of the Kentucky Court of Justice and supports the activities of more than 3,400 court system employees, including the elected offices of justices, judges and circuit court clerks. The AOC also executes the Judicial Branch budget.

###